



# County of Los Angeles CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICE

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WILLIAM T FUJIOKA  
Chief Executive Officer

November 18, 2010

To: Supervisor Gloria Molina, Chair  
Supervisor Mark Ridley-Thomas  
Supervisor Zev Yaroslavsky  
Supervisor Don Knabe  
Supervisor Michael D. Antonovich

From: William T Fujioka  
Chief Executive Officer

Board of Supervisors  
GLORIA MOLINA  
First District

MARK RIDLEY-THOMAS  
Second District

ZEV YAROSLAVSKY  
Third District

DON KNABE  
Fourth District

MICHAEL D. ANTONOVICH  
Fifth District

## **FAMILY AND CHILDREN'S INDEX STATUS REPORT**

On April 27, 2010, your Board directed the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) in consultation with the Chief Information Office (CIO), County Counsel, and other County departments currently exploring information sharing initiatives to: (a) examine other interagency information sharing systems nationwide, and determine what, if any, best practices could legally be integrated into the Family and Children Index (FCI) system including cost, and report back in 60 days; and (b) track and report back preliminarily in six months with a final report in 12 months on the overall efficacy of FCI, including the following issues: (i) quality of information, including assessment of FCI import barriers; (ii) level of usage by County staff; and (iii) ability of the leadership in Los Angeles County departments which participate in FCI to ensure usage compliance, as well as timely response to inquiries initiated as a result of searches in FCI which revealed prior contact(s) by various County departments.

In response to the April 27, 2010 motion, the CEO submitted two reports on June 29, 2010 that provided: (1) a detailed analysis of interagency sharing systems nationwide; and (2) a status report describing the progress that the CEO and the Interagency Council on Child Abuse and Neglect (ICAN), in conjunction with the FCI Managers Team<sup>1</sup> (Team), has made toward implementing your Board's directive to ensure that FCI is fully utilized.

<sup>1</sup>The Team also includes representatives from the nine participating FCI agencies, CIO, County Counsel, and the Internal Services Department (ISD).

*"To Enrich Lives Through Effective And Caring Service"*

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Intra-County Correspondence Sent Electronically Only**

This report is divided into two parts. Part I highlights major operational, technical and legislative accomplishments achieved by the Team from June 1, 2010 through October 29, 2010. This section includes a description of progress made by the Team to develop the FCI Communications Log<sup>2</sup> (CommLog), which is set to be pilot tested in January 2011; and a recommendation to use \$159,720 of Healthier Communities, Stronger Families and Thriving Children (HST) funds already allocated to enhance FCI to launch the pilot and complete Countywide roll out of the CommLog by May 31, 2011.

Part II consists of an *Assessment of FCI* based on usage reports and feedback received from staff participating in a series of Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) regional office discussions conducted by the CEO and DCFS during the months of August and September. As directed by your Board, a more detailed assessment of FCI will be provided in our final status report, which is scheduled for May 2011.

## **BACKGROUND**

FCI is the name given to the Los Angeles County custom application authorized by California Welfare and Institutions Code (WIC) Section 18961.5. The statute allows children services, health services, law enforcement, mental health services, probation, schools, and social services agencies within counties to share specific information about families who have had relevant contacts with these agencies and who have been identified as being at risk for child abuse or neglect. The statute requires that each county develop their own "at-risk" definition.

The application can only store specific information as allowed by law. It does so by receiving data from participating agency databases using a set of agency specific at-risk indicators that conform to the County's overall definition of "at risk". As described in the August 11, 2010 FCI Memorandum of Understanding (MOU), each agency uses their at-risk indicators as a filter to identify relevant cases. Once these cases are identified, legally allowable information is electronically imported into FCI.

Serving as a "pointer" system, FCI directs authorized users of participating agencies to other participating County agencies who have had contact with the family subject to an initial search and match made through the application. Once users are pointed to other agencies, the statute requires that confidential, protected health, substantive information about a family be shared through the formation of Multidisciplinary Teams (MDTs), unless some other legally permissible way to share that information already exists.

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<sup>2</sup> The CommLog is designed to automatically track and assess the exchange of information among agencies, such as: (1) when requests for information from agencies are initiated; (2) the timeliness by which agencies respond to these requests; and (3) to the extent possible, how subsequent information is shared by FCI agencies.

## **PART I: IMPLEMENTATION HIGHLIGHTS**

Below are highlights of major accomplishments achieved by the Team from June 1, 2010 through October 29, 2010:

### **OPERATIONAL**

- On June 22, 2010 and August 9, 2010, the CEO and DCFS provided testimony on Assembly Bill (AB) 2322 (Feuer/Bass) to both the State Senate's Health and Human Services and Finance Committees;
- On August 4, 2010, the CEO conducted a FCI "refresher" presentation to DCFS senior managers and regional administrators. The presentation has been used to engage regional office staff in discussion groups related to their use of FCI and any recommended improvements they might have;
- On August 10, 2010, the CEO and DCFS conducted the first in a series of 24 presentations/dialogues with regional office staff and staff from special units;
- On August 11, 2010, the CEO and the Team executed a revised FCI MOU, adding the Department of Health Services (DHS) as a new participating FCI agency, updating the at-risk indicators for most agencies and adding ICAN as a signatory;
- On September 7 and 9, 2010, the CEO and the Office of the District Attorney (DA) conducted two FCI Overview Training sessions with DCFS Public Inquiry and Hotline staff as a result of a new DCFS policy requiring these staff to respond to requests for information from other participating FCI agencies;
- On September 22, 2010, the CEO trained authorized users from DHS on all aspects of the FCI application;
- On October 12, 2010, ICAN and CEO met with the Coroner to further define their at-risk indicators, policies and procedures and identify any resources and potential costs related to their participation in FCI;
- On October 13, 2010, the CEO and DA trained authorized users from the Los Angeles Police Department (LAPD) on all aspects of the FCI application, including their policies and procedures for exchanging information with other participating FCI agencies; and

- On October 22, 2010, the Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) between the County and LAPD was executed, allowing LAPD to fully participate in FCI. LAPD is the first non-County agency to join FCI.

#### **NEXT STEPS:**

The target dates for the deliverables outlined below were revised to allow additional time for: (1) the CEO and Internal Services Department (ISD) to meet with agencies and customize the CommLog to meet their specific agency requirements; (2) the CEO to finalize the LAPD MOA and seek your Board's authority to execute it; and (3) DHS to upload information into FCI and allow the Team to analyze the records being added.

- By February 28, 2011, the CEO, in consultation with County Counsel and with efforts led by ICAN, will execute a new FCI MOU that includes the Coroner;
- By March 31, 2011, the CEO and DA will train authorized Coroner users on all aspects of the FCI application, including their policies and procedures for exchanging information with other participating FCI agencies; and
- By June 30, 2011, based on the outcome of the analysis of DHS data uploads, the CEO, in partnership with ICAN, will convene a meeting to discuss the feasibility of integrating private hospital data into FCI.

#### **TECHNICAL ENHANCEMENTS**

ISD, with support from Team members, continued to implement a variety of technical enhancements that have increased the effectiveness of the FCI application. These include:

- On June 15, 2010, DCFS and ISD developed an initial automated approach to transfer allowable LAPD information from the County's Electronic Suspected Child Abuse Report System (E-SCARS) database into FCI;
- On August 30, 2010, ISD implemented the enhanced address verification (Geo Version) function. This new feature produces more accurate matches as the search function automatically verifies addresses based on geographical location;
- On September 16, 2010, the CEO and ISD presented the final revised version of the CommLog to the Team, which included agency-specific requirements received during various customization meetings. The CommLog was unanimously approved for pilot testing pending the completion of additional minor changes requested by agencies; and

- On October 19, 2010, DHS began uploading their records into FCI.

#### **NEXT STEPS:**

The time frames for technical enhancements were also revised for the same reasons as outlined in the previous section. As mentioned earlier, the CEO recommends that \$159,720 in HST funds already allocated to enhance FCI be used to complete the technical enhancements to the CommLog and ensure Countywide roll out by May 31, 2011, as described below:

- By October 29, 2010, ISD and DCFS will conduct the first "live" download of allowable LAPD information into FCI from E-SCARS;
- By December 31, 2010, ISD will complete any outstanding CommLog modifications and begin training staff that will participate in the CommLog pilot;
- By January 31, 2011, the Team will complete the CommLog pilot;
- By February 28, 2011, based on the results of the pilot, ISD will begin a phased roll out of the CommLog to each of the FCI participating agencies; and
- By May 31, 2011, the Team will complete Countywide implementation of the CommLog.

#### **LEGISLATIVE EFFORTS**

County-sponsored AB 2322 (Feuer/Bass) was signed by the Governor on September 29, 2010. The law is effective immediately because an urgency clause was attached to the bill. The new law allows FCI to: (1) store identifying information for all non-family members residing in a child's home; (2) list convictions of crimes against children for up to 50 years; and (3) clarify who can participate in MDTs. The new law also requires counties with such a computerized database system to install system controls to monitor system use and to detect any violations of the system controls. The changes made to FCI through this law are consistent with feedback received from DCFS staff surveyed earlier in the year and reiterated during the presentations/dialogues that were recently conducted (Attachment). AB 2322 received unanimous bipartisan support in both houses and was co-sponsored by the County Welfare Directors Association and the Service Employees International Union (SEIU).

AB 2229 (Brownley), introduced by the DA, was also signed into law on September 29, 2010. This new law will facilitate a more expeditious exchange of information among participating FCI agencies by reducing the number of members required to form a MDT from three to two. Ultimately, these legislative changes will help

facilitate better decision making by Children's Social Workers (CSWs) who investigate allegations of child abuse and neglect and promote the timely exchange of comprehensive information among FCI agencies. AB 2229 will become effective January 1, 2011.

## **PART II: FCI ASSESSMENT**

As reported in our June 29, 2010 Status Report, the Team administered 814 end-user surveys to gather valuable information related to the functionality and use of FCI. The Team plans to continue to conduct surveys in the future and will combine the findings from these surveys with data gathered from the CommLog to better assess the use and effectiveness of FCI.

For this reporting period, the CEO and DCFS conducted a series of FCI "refresher" presentations as a means of gathering information directly from FCI users. These presentations were designed to dispel misconceptions about FCI, discuss improvements being implemented (i.e., the "Geo Version" and CommLog), and reinforce policies/procedures related to the exchange of information among FCI agencies. In addition, the presentations provided an opportunity to engage DCFS regional staff in a dialogue about their experiences with FCI and how to further improve it. From August 4, 2010 through October 29, 2010, the CEO and DCFS conducted 17 of 24 planned presentations/discussion groups with DCFS staff, including a presentation to SEIU Local Chapter 721. The remaining presentations/dialogues are scheduled to be completed by December 2010.

## **HIGHLIGHTS OF FCI DIALOGUES**

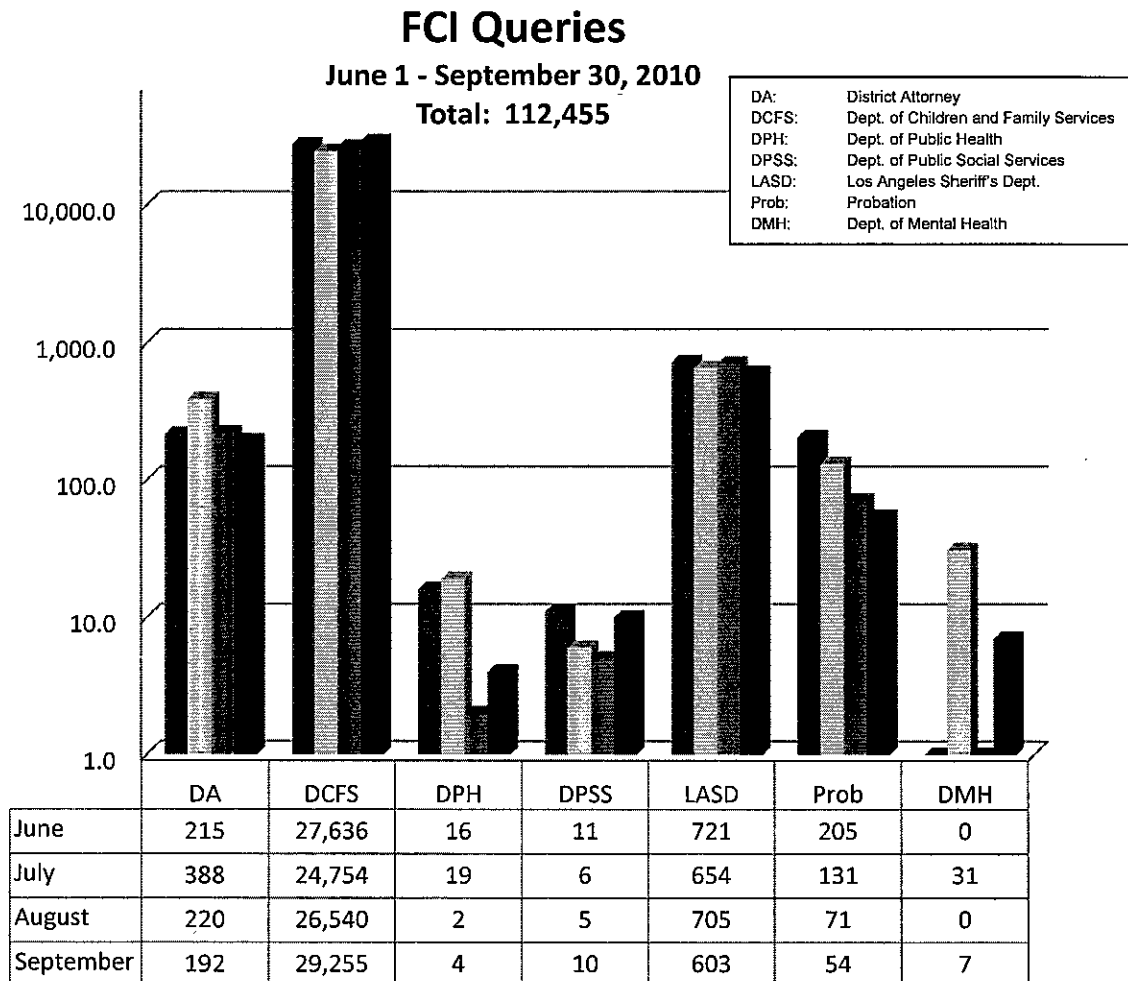
Through a broad set of questions, the CEO and DCFS were able to gather detailed feedback from approximately 550 CSWs, Search, Attach and Merge Clerks, Regional Administrators, and staff from special units. Some of their most common responses/themes that emerged from the dialogues were that FCI is easy to use, provides very helpful information, and that the accuracy of the information and the response times from other departments has greatly improved. Other significant comments related to improvements were to expand some of the departments' at-risk indicators to capture a broader range of records and to reinforce FCI policy and procedures related to use of the application. Specific comments, as well as actions taken by the Team, are included in the Attachment.

Recommendations that were not included in the Attachment will be analyzed by the Team to determine their feasibility for implementation. Based on that analysis, the Team will develop its recommendations and report back to your Board as part of our final status report scheduled for May 2011.

## FCI DATA QUERIES

Between June 1, 2010 and September 30, 2010, a total of 112,455 FCI queries were made by participating agencies. The top three departments that queried FCI were: DCFS: 108,185; LASD: 2,683; and DA: 1,015.

**Note:** Queries performed is only a partial indicator of overall FCI use. The majority of queries were performed by DCFS. Other County agencies queried FCI for a variety of reasons including verifying addresses, assisting with basic case management processes, and/or verifying the existence of historical records. Not all agencies query FCI as part of their normal business process.

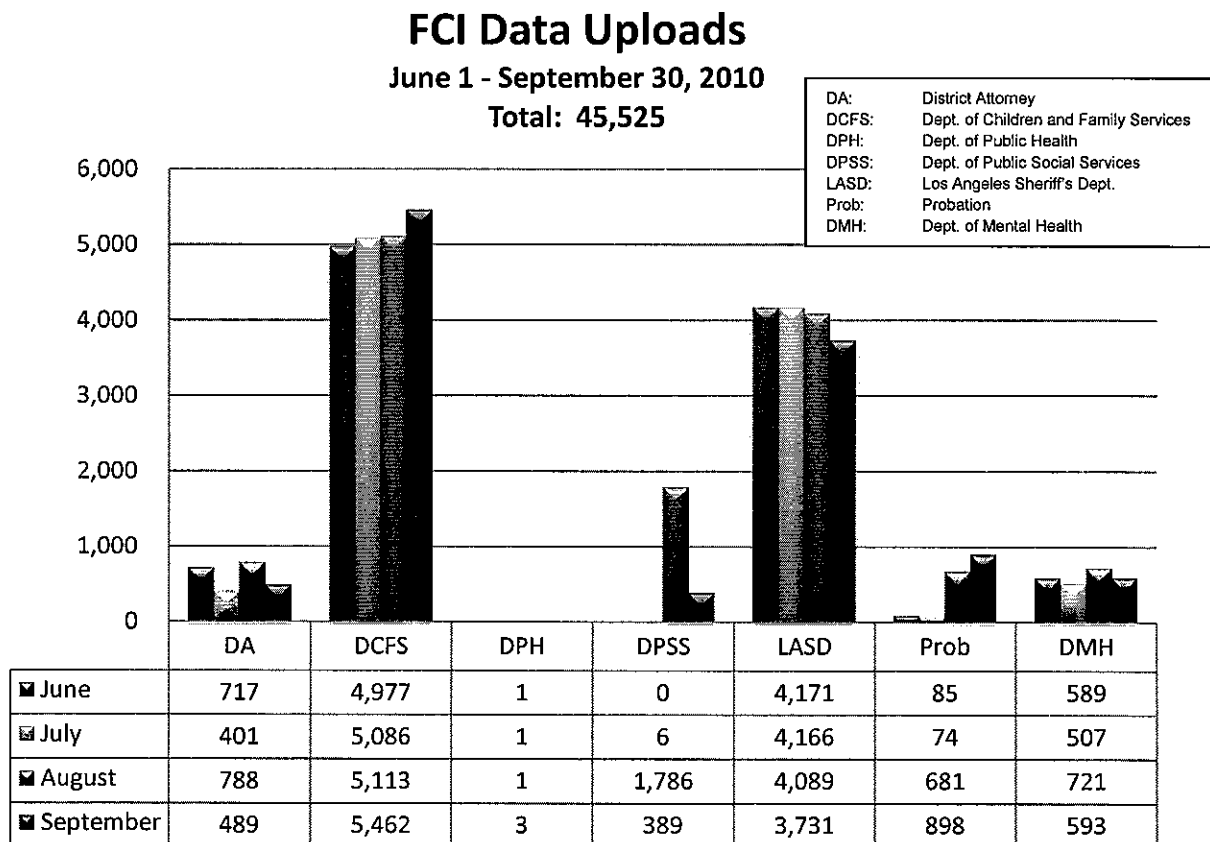


## FCI DATA UPLOADS

Between June 1, 2010 and September 30, 2010, a total of 45,525 records were uploaded into FCI by participating agencies. The total amount of records in FCI to date is 2,237,358. The top three agencies uploading data into FCI were: DCFS: 20,638; LASD: 16,157; and DMH: 2,410.

**Note:** The information outlined in the charts below represents only new records being added to FCI on a monthly basis. It does not indicate how frequently information is uploaded by agencies into FCI. Each agency uploads information on a regular basis, but on different schedules. (The CEO is looking into the feasibility of standardizing the frequency of uploads across all agencies.) In the charts below, a missing agency (e.g., DPSS in June) indicates that no data was uploaded into FCI because there weren't any records that matched that agency's at-risk indicators during that month.

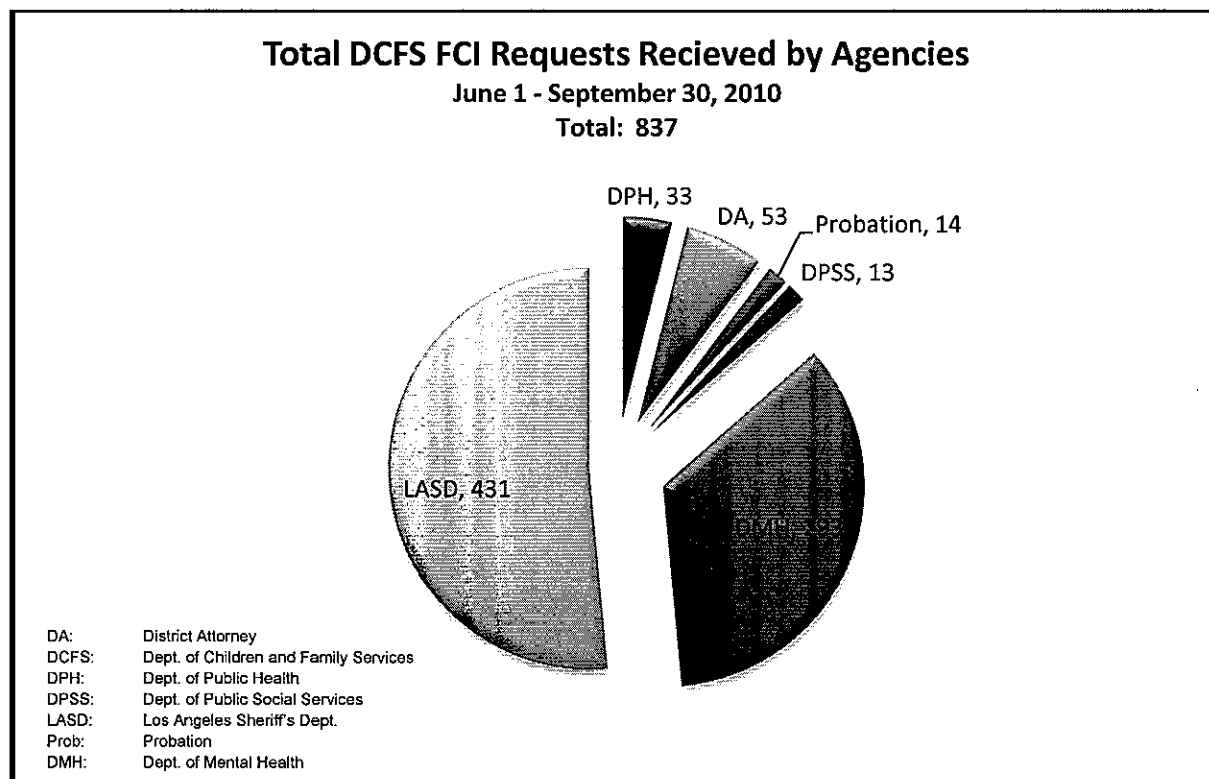
The increases in uploads during August and September for DPSS and Probation occurred as a result of revised at-risk indicators used to identify records.



## DATA REQUESTS MADE BY DCFS

The figures reported in the chart below reflect the number of requests for information that FCI agencies received from DCFS between July 1 and September 30, 2010. According to manual logs kept by the agencies, a total of 837 requests were received from DCFS during this period of time.

**Note:** Without the CommLog, the County does not have the ability to accurately calculate the flow of requests and responses for information between agencies. As a result, the Team had to rely on each agency's manual tracking of FCI communications for this report. Once implemented, the CommLog will provide near real-time data about how information is exchanged, allow the Team to monitor these exchanges, and take corrective actions as necessary. Additionally, DCFS does not have the ability to accurately confirm how many requests they actually made to other agencies so it is very likely that the number of requests made by DCFS to other agencies is much higher than reported here.



## CONCLUSION

During this reporting period, the CEO, ICAN, and the Team have continued to work collaboratively to implement your Board's directive to fully implement FCI. By building on the successes outlined in our June 29, 2010 report, the Team has: (1) expanded FCI participation to include DHS and LAPD and set the foundation for incorporating other key County and non-County agencies before the end of this Fiscal Year; (2) made significant inroads toward sharing information among agencies through the enactment of AB 2322 into State law; and (3) customized the CommLog to meet the specifications of each FCI agency and will complete Countywide roll out of the CommLog by May 2011 pending the approval to use HST funds to implement the CommLog.

In addition, the CEO and DCFS are in the process of completing a series of presentations/dialogues sessions with frontline FCI users to gather their feedback and ideas for improving FCI. Many of these ideas are already being phased in by the Team and are expected to increase FCI's usefulness and enhance the County's ability to keep children safe from abuse and neglect. Our final status report is scheduled for May 2011. We will continue to keep your Board apprised of developments as they arise.

If you have any questions about the report or the findings, please contact me or your staff may contact Kathy House, Assistant Chief Executive Officer at (213) 974-4530, or via e-mail at [khhouse@ceo.lacounty.gov](mailto:khhouse@ceo.lacounty.gov).

WTF:KH:LB  
CP:GS:mh

### Attachment

c: Executive Office  
County Counsel  
Children and Family Services  
District Attorney  
Health Services  
Mental Health  
Probation  
Public Health  
Public Social Services  
Sheriff  
Interagency Council on Child Abuse and Neglect  
Los Angeles Police Department

**Family and Children's Index (FCI)  
Staff Comments and Recommendations**

<p style="text-align: center;"><b>How well is FCI working?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• FCI is easy to use and the information contained is more accurate than before;</li> <li>• FCI is an excellent tool for Emergency Response Workers;</li> <li>• The FCI training conducted by the CEO was extremely helpful and explained FCI thoroughly;</li> <li>• FCI is very helpful during the course of an investigation and when follow-up is needed; and</li> <li>• Response time from agencies has improved greatly, especially from the Departments of Mental Health (DMH), Probation, and the Sheriff (LASD).</li> </ul>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>What would you improve about FCI?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure that staff from participating agencies understand the policies and procedures for sharing information;</li> <li>• Provide clearer guidelines about the type of information that can be shared and in what context;</li> <li>• Broaden the at-risk indicators to include drug abuse history including any drug-related arrests, psychiatric hospitalizations and pharmaceutical prescription history;</li> <li>• Expedite the process for accessing archived LASD records;</li> <li>• Eliminate duplicative searches and cut down on increased workload by creating a specific unit within each agency to conduct FCI searches, request information, and facilitate the gathering of documents/information for social workers;</li> <li>• Reinforce the required response time policy between participating agencies;</li> <li>• Include a "cheat sheet" that describes what agency record numbers mean, (i.e., LASD's case numbers contain station location, type of crime, etc.);</li> <li>• Add agency-specific Information Sharing Templates that outline the type of information that requesting agencies can expect to receive;</li> <li>• Streamline the steps needed to obtain information from various agencies; and</li> <li>• Provide FCI trainings in-person rather than online via the County's Learning Net.</li> </ul>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>As a social worker, what would make your job easier and give you all the information that you need to properly investigate suspected cases of child abuse and neglect?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Expedite the process for gathering information on all FCI hits prior to the Emergency Response Worker going out on an investigation;</li> <li>• Allow requests for and responses to requests for information to be sent through email or other electronic means;</li> <li>• Create a system that simultaneously searches Federal, State and County databases (i.e., Immigration, Parole, Department of Community and Senior Services, etc.) and produces an "integrated" report on the children, family members, and other persons living in the home for CSWs investigating a case; and</li> <li>• Change the current DCFS policy to allow for initial FCI searches to be done at the Child Protection Hotline.</li> </ul>

**Family and Children's Index (FCI)  
Staff Recommendations and Managers Team Actions**

The Team is taking a variety of steps (outlined below) to address some of the recommendations made by DCFS staff at FCI Refresher Presentations and Dialogues conducted by the CEO and DCFS.

Recommendations that were not included in the table will be analyzed by the Team to determine their feasibility for implementation. Based on this analysis, the Team will develop its recommendations and report back to your Board as part of our final status report scheduled for May 2011.

Staff Recommendations	Actions
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Ensure that all participating agency staff understand FCI policies, procedures and guidelines for sharing information and in what context it can be shared; and</li> <li>2. Provide FCI trainings in-person rather than online via the County's Learning Net.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. As of October 29, 2010, the CEO and DCFS conducted 17 out of 24 planned Presentations/Dialogues with DCFS staff, including a presentation to SEIU Local Chapter 721. The remaining Presentations/Dialogues are scheduled to be completed by December 2010.  The presentations were designed to dispel misconceptions about FCI, discuss improvements being implemented (i.e., the "Geo Version" and CommLog) and reinforce policies/procedures related to the exchange of information among agencies. In addition, the presentations provided an opportunity to engage DCFS regional staff in a dialogue about their experiences with FCI and how to further improve it.</li> <li>2. The Team will attempt to conduct as many future trainings, such as the CommLog trainings, in-person and will use these opportunities to reinforce agency-specific protocols and procedures related to the exchange of information at those trainings.</li> </ol>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Add agency-specific Information Sharing Templates to FCI; and</li> <li>2. Include a "cheat sheet" that describes what agency record numbers mean, (i.e., Sheriff's case numbers indicate station location, type of crime, etc.).</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. ISD will add agency-specific Templates to FCI so that users requesting information know the type of information they can expect to obtain from other agencies.</li> <li>2. The Team has developed a set of comprehensive "cheat sheets" that will be distributed to all FCI users and posted in FCI for easy reference.</li> </ol>

Broaden at-risk indicators to include psychiatric hospitalizations.	DMH has agreed to provide information on psychiatric hospitalization of parents occurring within the past five years. The CEO and DMH are working with County Counsel regarding the reporting of inpatient psychiatric admissions, including the possible restriction of access to that information by anyone other than DCFS workers.
Expedite the process for accessing archived LASD records.	The CEO is currently working with LASD to create an expedited process for accessing archived records that are kept in Norwalk.
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Expedite the process for gathering information on all FCI matched searches prior to the Emergency Response Worker going out on an investigation; and</li> <li>2. Allow requests for and responses to requests for information to be sent through email or other electronic means.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The CEO continues to explore the feasibility of adapting elements of previously identified information sharing models with the goal of accessing data from multiple databases with a single search. A workgroup consisting of representatives from the CIO, ISD, County Counsel, and the Los Angeles County Education Coordinating Council (ECC) has been formed to further explore these possibilities.</li> <li>2. The CEO will follow-up with the CIO and participating FCI agencies regarding the possibility of encrypting emails to further safeguard the transmission of confidential information and facilitate the exchange of information among agencies.</li> </ol>
<p>Expand FCI to include:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The Coroner;</li> <li>2. Private hospitals throughout Los Angeles County; and</li> <li>3. Local School Districts.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. If fiscally feasible, the CEO, in consultation with County Counsel and with efforts led by ICAN, will execute a new FCI MOU that includes the Coroner by February 28, 2011. Data from the Coroner is expected to be uploaded into FCI by the end of April 2011.</li> <li>2. Based on the outcome of the analysis of DHS data uploads, the CEO, in partnership with ICAN, will convene a meeting to discuss the feasibility of integrating private hospital data into FCI.</li> <li>3. The Team is working with the ECC to explore strategies that could allow CSWs to access school data.</li> </ol>